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TREE- AND PILLAR-WORSHIP.

BY

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No apology, I feel sure, is needed for bringing before the members of this Society the subject with which the following pages are to deal ; for, although it is not one which can perhaps be called "literary," I shall yet hope to treat it in a "literary" manner, such as may make it worthy of attention ; and it is, moreover, one which bulks large, if not in modern, yet in all ancient literature, more especially in the mythology and folklore of the past, and in that of primitive peoples to-day. One aspect of the subject also, I may remind you, has been already brought before this Society in the learned and exhaustive paper, entitled "Dendrophoria," by Dr. Phené.

My range to-night extends over wider limits both of time and space, and, so far as is possible in one paper, I shall endeavour to do something more than merely touch the fringe of a vast subject. It is my purpose to co-ordinate its various branches, and from customs surviving in a mutilated and half-hearted fashion, more particularly within our own Islands, to deduce the origin and meaning of "Tree-worship" in the past. The subject is one which touches both anthropology and folklore, and in both these aspects it is worthy of consideration by the members of a learned Society such as this.

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Tree-worship has indeed been very fully explored, from the point of view of both anthropology and folklore, by many modern writers, and I can do little more than make use of their investigations, and, from an archæological point of view, plead for the continuance and revival of customs which, stripped of their old pagan associations, are innocent and harmless enough in themselves, and of real practical advantage to the community. Bastian, in 'Der Baum,' and Mannhardt in his 'Baumkultus,' have gathered a vast store of facts from all parts of the world, which prove the universal prevalence of "Tree-worship" among primitive peoples in all ages, and of the facts collected by them Mr. Frazer makes large use in 'The Golden Bough,' as also does Prof. Tylor in his 'Primitive Culture.' The latter adduces the facts to support his theory of primitive "animism;" the former carries the investigation further, and, by means of his demonstration of the idea of the "Tree-spirit," enters the region of Polytheism.

Bötticher has written a long and elaborate treatise on 'Tree-worship among the Greeks,' and Dr. Arthur Evans, by his wonderful discoveries in Crete, has demonstrated the existence of the same worship among the Cretans of the Mycenæan and pre-Mycenæan ages. To these I shall refer more fully in the course of my argument. Our investigation to-night is more especially concerned with what may be learnt as to primitive Tree-worship from its relics among ourselves, and we shall only make use of the wider researches of the writers named, and of others who have dealt with the subject, to illustrate the fact that customs still to be found in England

and Scotland and Ireland to-day go to prove the truth that so universal a form of worship has its roots deep in the mystic past of our race. These customs, floating like wastrels on the sea of time, meaningless in themselves, and apparently confused and shapeless, are yet full of instruction as to the origin and significance of tree-worship to the careful observer. As long as they are regarded separately and apart their meaning is hidden—each one, like the Cyclops in Virgil, if the illustration may be used, is just “*monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum* ;” as it is with the facts of natural science, so it is with the facts of anthropology and folklore: arrangement and co-ordination cause the light to spring forth.

Few, for example, would at first sight associate the customs connected with May Day and the Vernal Festival with “Tree- and Pillar-worship,” at least in its most primitive form. They have been explained as survivals of the old *Floralia* of the Romans, without, at least until recently, any attempt being made to carry the investigation any further back into the dim past of our race; and yet, when they are examined with attention, they will be found to be eloquent of the old worship of trees, with which was intimately connected, though as a later development, the worship of pillars, whether of wood or stone—a worship which has come down to us from Neolithic ancestors as it did to the Babylonians, Canaanites (from whom it passed to the Israelites), Cretans, Greeks, and Romans of old.

The customs connected with May Day are too well known to be described in detail. A general account

will suffice, together with certain pregnant details drawn from separate localities. In their later development, as they were practised down to the days of our fathers, and are still in some quiet country villages not yet disturbed by the whistle of the locomotive or the hum of the motor-car, these customs consisted in the gathering of the villagers on the green in the early morning. There they proceeded to erect, in the centre of the green, the May-pole. This was a tall young sapling from the forest, stripped of boughs and leaves, but gaily decked instead with garlands of flowers, and hung with many-hued ribbons and strips of coloured paper. Round this the young people, carrying branches, the maidens also crowned with garlands, danced to the strains of lively music, and the rite was not complete until one maiden, chosen as the fairest of them all, was proclaimed Queen of the May.

This is merely a rough generalisation. We will now look at some details belonging to the celebration, taken from places in our own country in which they may be found still extant.

In a paper read before the British Archæological Association in 1899 by Mr. Chas. Dack the following interesting account is given of old May-day customs at Peterborough, together with examples of the May Songs, and these may be compared with the customs in other parts of Northants described in the 'East Anglian' for April, 1902 :

May Day is still a great day with children ; from early in the morning till the afternoon you see groups of children carrying garlands carefully covered with a white cloth. These garlands are made with hoops and half-hoops, gaily

decorated with flowers, foliage, ribbons and coloured paper, and in the centre, generally, the best doll to be had. The structure is fastened to a pole, and two girls carry it. The little girls are gaily dressed in their Spring clothes, with wreaths of tissue-paper roses and streamers on their heads, and also coloured tissue-paper trimmings and streamers on their dresses. Then there are their attendants, also similarly dressed; but the most important is the young lady who carries the money-box, who is keenly watched by several pairs of interested eyes. They come round to the various houses, and when the door opens they begin to sing their songs (several of which I have copied), and uncover the garland, and the money-box is rattled. Generally, the doorway is filled with all the family, and a penny is usually given, and off the party trudge to the next house and the performance is continued; sometimes, for a larger gratuity, more verses will be sung. In the afternoon their mothers take the money, and a high tea is provided; and, if fine, the children still sport their finery, and a very pleasant evening is spent.

On old May Day the custom is repeated; but it depends for its success upon the state of the weather on May 1st.

May-day Garland Songs.

I.

Good morrow, Lords and Ladies !

It is the first of May,

We hope you'll view our garlands,

They are so bright and gay.

Chorus—To the greenwoods we will go,

To the greenwoods we will go,

To the greenwoods we will go, go, go,

To the greenwoods we will go.

This bunch of May it looks so gay,
 Before your door it stands;
 It is but a sprout, but it's well spread out
 By the work of our Lord's hands.
 Chorus—To the greenwoods, etc.

The cuckoo sings in April,
 The cuckoo sings in May,
 The cuckoo sings in June;
 In July she flies away.
 Chorus—To the greenwoods, etc.

II.

Come, see our new garland,
 So green and so gay;
 'Tis the firstfruits of spring
 And the glory of May.
Here are cowslips and daisies,
 And hyacinths blue,
Here are buttercups bright,
 And anemones too;
Here are pansies weary,
 And hawthorn so sweet,
 And the violets fragrant
 Together do meet.
 But yet there's no garland
 That we may entwine,
 Like the garland of virtue
 Entwinèd divine.

III.

Awake, awake, good people all,
 Awake, and you shall hear;
 Awake, awake, lift up your voice,
 And pray to God in fear.
 Hallelujah! to the Lamb, who died on Mount Calvary,
 Hallelujah! Hallelujah! to the Lamb.

A bunch of May have I brought you,
Before your door it stands;
It's only a sprout, but well spread about
By the work of our Lord's hands.
Hallelujah ! to the Lamb, who died on Mount Calvary,
Hallelujah ! Hallelujah ! to the Lamb.

Take the Bible in your hands,
And read the Scriptures through,
And when the Day of Judgment comes,
The Lord will think of you.
Hallelujah ! to the Lamb, who died on Mount Calvary,
Hallelujah ! Hallelujah ! to the Lamb.

I have a purse within my pocket,
It's lined with silk and string,
And all I want is silver now
To line it well within.
Hallelujah ! to the Lamb, who died on Mount Calvary,
Hallelujah ! Hallelujah ! to the Lamb.

It is also sung with this chorus :

And a Maying we will go.
And a Maying we will go, go, go.

IV.

Remember us poor Mayers all,
And hear how we begin
To lead our lives in righteousness,
For fear we die in sin.

For if we die, and die in sin,
The Lord will to us say,
" Begone, begone, you wicked ones,
For I know not your way."

Here I've been wandering all the night,
And almost all the day ;
And just returnèd back again,
And brought you a branch of May.

A branch of May I've brought you here,
Before your door to stand ;
It's but a sprout, but it's well spread about,
For it's the work of our Lord's hand.

The fields and meadows are so green,
As green as any leek ;
And our heavenly Father waters them
With His heavenly dew so sweet.

Here is a well where water flows
To quench the heat of sin ;
There is a tree where knowledge grows—
Lord, lead our lives therein.

Awake, awake, my pretty maid,
Out of your drowsy dream ;
And step into your dairy room
And fetch a bowl of cream.

If not a bowl of your good cream,
A mug of your strong beer ;
For the Lord doth know where we shall be
To be merry another year.

Now take your Bible in your hand
And read your chapter through ;
And when the Day of Judgment comes,
The Lord will remember you.

And now my song is almost done,
No longer can I stay ;
God bless you all, both great and small,
I wish you a joyful May.
And I hope you'll find your money-box
Before we go away.

A variant of these Northants verses is found
at Abingdon, in Berks, where the young people

formerly went about in groups on May morning singing a carol, of which the following are two of the verses :

We've been rambling all the night,
And some time of this day ;
And now returning back again,
We bring a garland gay.

A garland gay we bring you here,
And at your door we stand ;
It is a sprout well budded out,
The work of our Lord's hand.

At Narborough, in Norfolk, down to twenty years ago, on May-day morning the boys and girls of the village used to gather. A donkey-cart was procured, in which was placed a large cartwheel, and into the hub of the wheel was placed erect a gaily decorated pole. Streamers of ribbons hung from the top, which the children held, and a boy rode in the cart to drive the donkey. As they went through the village they danced round the cart singing :

It was Nature's fine gay [? gala] day,
And a bright smiling May Day,
When the lads and the lasses tripped lightly away ;
'Twas then that he wooed me,
'Twas then he subdued me,
And promised me more than I venture to say.
etc., etc.

Money was collected, which was afterwards spent in a feast for the children, and dances were held on the green in the evening.

At the villages of Saffron Walden and Debden, in Essex, on the 1st of May little girls go about in

parties from door to door singing songs almost identical with the above and carrying garlands; a doll dressed in white is usually placed in the middle of each garland. Similar customs have been and still are observed, as Mr. Frazer says, in various parts of England, and to his exhaustive list I would here refer. Northampton, Uttoxeter, Watford, Abingdon, the village of Bampton-in-the-Bush, Oxon., Sevenoaks, Cambridge, Salisbury, all figure in his catalogue of English examples, to say nothing of his list of places in all parts of Europe where this custom exists, in essence one and the same, but everywhere with local variants. The garlands are generally in the form of hoops intersecting each other at right angles. These hoops are covered with any wild flowers in season, and are further ornamented with ribbons. Sometimes the garlands are fastened to the end of a stick carried perpendicularly, sometimes they hang from the middle of a stick borne horizontally by two children.

In Northants also a young tree ten or twelve feet high used to be planted before each house on May Day so as to appear growing. An ancient custom, still retained by the Cornish, is that of decking their doors and porches on May 1st with green boughs of sycamore and hawthorn, and of planting trees, or, rather, stumps of trees, before their houses. The town of Helston, in Cornwall, had, and I believe still has, a custom peculiar to itself, which, however, took place on May 8th, instead of on the 1st, that is, on the octave of the May-day Festival. I saw it myself some twenty years ago. At a very early hour in the morning a party of

men and boys go into the country, and return about 7 o'clock, bearing green branches, and announcing in a very melancholy ditty that "winter is gone, and that they have been to the merry greenwood to fetch home summer in its place." Having perambulated the town and accepted money from all who will give, they retire from the scene, and the town, for the remainder of the morning, is enlivened by the continuous arrival of carriages from the country and neighbouring towns, bringing visitors to take part in the coming gaiety.

At 1 p.m. a large party of ladies and gentlemen, in summer garments, and lavishly adorned with flowers, gather opposite the Town Hall, and, preceded by a band of music, begin a peculiar kind of dance called "the furry," first tripping on in a double row, and then, at a change in the tune, wheeling round in couples. These evolutions are not confined to the street; for, here and there, where the doors have been thrown open, the dancers enter the houses, band and all, pass through the courts and gardens, and may presently be seen coming out by another door, if the house has more than one, than that by which they entered. In this way they traverse the whole town, presenting an appearance as gay as it is unusual, especially while winding through some of the very beautiful gardens for which this town is celebrated, and which at this season, the lilacs and laburnums being in full flower, are arranged in their showiest livery. Later in the day other parties go through the same performances, and it is not till quite late at night that the little town returns to its wonted quiet.

This custom is of immemorial antiquity, and it may be noted that the air played while the dancing is going on is still traditional in Wales and Brittany, countries inhabited by the same race as the Cornish, and carrying back the celebration, therefore, to at least a time when the forefathers of these three peoples were the dominant race in Gaul and Britain.

The custom of erecting a Maypole was at one time universal in England and on the Continent, though in some parts of the latter the pole was not erected till June 23rd, the Eve of St. John. This is the case in Sweden, in Bohemia, and also in the Basque country round Bayonne. In this last the erection of the pole is associated with two other customs, to which I will only allude here—the lighting of the great bonfires, the Beltan, at night, into and over which the cattle are driven, and round which the youths and maidens join hands and dance, from time to time themselves passing through the fire. In this scene of wild barbaric festivity, picturesque and interesting beyond measure, I have myself taken part. The other custom was that which survives in one form or another in many localities, that young maidens should arise at the earliest dawn on Midsummer morning, and, passing swiftly and silently from the house *in statu naturæ*, should bathe in the dew-covered, sun-flecked grass of the meadow, after which, provided no eye had seen them, they would be sure to secure the husband of their choice in the course of the ensuing year.

A few examples of the May-day Maypole will be sufficient to supplement the general description

previously given. Borlase, the historian of Cornwall, says:—"From towns they make incursions, on May Eve, into the country, cut down a tall elm, bring it to the town with rejoicings, and having fitted a straight taper pole to the end of it, and painted it, erect it in the most public part, and, upon holidays and festivals, dress it with garlands of flowers." In Northumberland, down apparently to near the end of the eighteenth century, young people of both sexes used to go out early on May morning to gather the flowering thorn and the dew off the grass, which they brought home with music and acclamations; then, having dressed a pole on the green with garlands, they danced about it. A syllabub made of warm milk from the cow, sweet cakes, and wine, was prepared for the feast; and a kind of divination to discover who should be wedded first was practised by dropping a marriage ring into the syllabub and fishing for it with a ladle. The mention of the gathering of the thorn and the marriage divination reminds one of the common European custom of placing a green bush on May Day before or on the house of a beloved maiden. In some parts of England this custom took the form of placing a sprig of thorn in the maiden's window, but it should be noted that great care needed to be exercised, for if it should be of *black* thorn instead of *white* (the *real* May) dire disaster was portended, and *white* thorn in bloom is very rare in England on May Day! Mr. Dack describes this custom at Peterborough, with a slight variation in the meaning, as follows:—"On May Day a curious custom was observed: the ardent lover would place a piece of

May in bloom in the window, or the hole of the window-shutter, of the house in which his lady lived; but if there had been a quarrel, a piece of blackthorn was used instead of the May-blossom, so that the neighbours would know the state of affairs." This was a universal European custom, as will be noted later on, although in most places it took the form of putting a green bush in or upon the maiden's dwelling. The usual custom was to bring in a new May tree each year, though in England, in later times, it seems to have been permanent. This was due to forgetfulness of its original meaning.

It will be remembered that in speaking of the May garlands mention was made of a doll in connection therewith. This doll was called the "Lady of the May," and leads us on to the next point—the choice of the fairest maiden to be "Queen of the May;" but before passing to this, the most poetic and romantic part of our subject, we must not forget the procession of leaf-clad mummers, with one specially distinguished at their head, which seems to represent the correlative idea, though in a degraded form, of the "*King of the May*." In England the best known example is the "Jack-in-the green," a chimney-sweep who walks encased in a pyramidal framework of wicker, covered with holly and ivy, and surmounted by a crown of flowers and ribbons. Thus arrayed he dances on May Day at the head of a troop of chimney-sweeps, who collect pence. Chimney-sweeps were probably chosen for the purpose because by May Day the need for fire was supposed to be over, and the sweep

would have no chance of earning money at his trade until the following winter.

As regards the May Queen, she is very familiar to us in England, and is common in France and other parts. In the south-east of Ireland on May Day the prettiest girl used to be chosen Queen of the District for twelve months. She was crowned with wild flowers; feasting, dancing, and rustic sports followed, and were closed by a grand procession in the evening. In some places both a king and queen, or lord and lady, were chosen. I remember when I was at Grenoble in 1873 seeing on the 1st of May a king and queen chosen, and set on a throne in view of the assembled crowd. In England there is a custom at Headington, near Oxford, for each garland to be carried by two girls, followed by a lord and lady,—a boy and girl linked together by a white handkerchief, of which each held an end, and dressed with ribbons, sashes, and flowers. At each door they sang a verse similar to those already quoted, and on receiving money the lord put his arm about the lady's waist and kissed her.

A custom that seems to point simply to the idea of the revival of vegetation in spring was once prevalent in the Highlands of Scotland, and has been thus described:—"Upon the night before Candlemas it is usual, in the Hebrides, to make a bed with corn and hay, over which some blankets are laid, in a part of the house near the door; when it is ready, a person goes out and repeats three times, 'Bridget, Bridget, come in; thy bed is ready.' Another account gives it as 'Brüd is come, Brüd

is welcome.' One or more candles are left burning near it all night."

The rites connected with Sacred Trees must not be forgotten in this connection. In our own country, as Mr. Tylor reminds us, names like *Holyoake* and *Holynwood* record our own old memories of the holy trees and groves, memories long lingering in the tenacious peasant mind; while Jakob Grimm even ventures to connect historically the ancient sacred inviolate wood with the later royal forest, an ethnological argument which would begin with the savage adoring of the spirit of the forest and end with the modern landowner preserving his pheasants.

In Ireland, Sacred Trees are met with in many localities, and are of a variety of species. The mountain-ash is popularly supposed in that country to have a peculiar virtue against the attacks of fairies, witches, or malign influences generally. When the dairymaid churns for a long time without making butter, she will stir the cream with a sprig of ~~vowen~~ *van*, and strike the cow with another, thus breaking the spell. The ancient Irish believed that the first man sprang from an alder, the first woman from a mountain-ash. Both trees are still believed to be endowed with mystic properties. On May Eve, withes made of the branches of the mountain-ash are tied round the horns of cows; temporary hoops, formed in the same way, are placed round churns, to counteract the spells of the fairies, always busily engaged before sunrise on May morning, trying to steal the butter of the farmers. There seems to be some connection in the sacred ash of Ireland with the sacred World-ash of the

Scandinavian mythology. This World-ash of the Eddas, generally called Yggdrasil's Ash, is one of the most interesting survivals of Tree-worship. It is described by the Sibyl in 'Völuspa': "I know an ash called Yggdrasil, a high tree sprinkled with white moisture (thence come the dews that fall in the dales); it stands ever green by Urd's spring. Thence come three maids, all knowing, from the hall that stands under the tree"; and as a sign of the approaching doom she says, "Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands; the old tree groans."

Grimnismal says that the gods go every day to hold judgment by the ash, and further speaks of the serpent Nidhögge who gnaws at its root. The connection between tree- and serpent-worship, so well described in Fergusson's monumental work on the subject, lies beyond our province on this occasion, but it is to be noted that, unlike other mythologies, the snake is here the destroyer, not the protector of the tree. The ash is the oracle, the judgment-place of the gods, the dwelling of the Fates, the source of the spring of knowledge. The sacred character of the Ash may also be deduced from the number of place-names connected with it to be found in England. For example, we have "Æscendun," now Ashdown, where Alfred won his great victory over the Danes. On the borders of Kent and Surrey we have "Ashdown Forest;" in Kent there is the town of Ashford, and in Surrey Ashted; while in Suffolk we have two places called simply "Ash" or "Ashe," "Ashby," "Essham" or "Asham," and "Ashfield;" and in Leicestershire, "Ashby-de-la-Zouch."

In Scandinavian poetry there are frequent allusions

to the old worship of trees, combined with references to the dragon Fafnir, who guarded the tree that was decked with the golden treasure. These occur as "Kennings" or metaphors, but they point to a time when the belief was alive. As Mr. Collingwood remarks in the introduction to his beautiful translation of the "Kormaks-Saga," recently published by the Viking Club: "The Skalds liked a round-about way of expressing themselves; many poets do. Men are called gods of the sword or spear, or 'staves' of the spear, because they carry it; and so the 'trees' of anything they 'bear,' " and ladies are trees decked with ornaments. "The primitive custom of hanging offerings on sacred trees, fetish trees, may have suggested the idea" (no doubt this is the origin of it); "and so, when we read of the Fir-tree wreathed in silk or gold, or carrying shields, we see a picture by no means absurd, though alien to our current coinage of poetical diction, and a symbol, ready to the mind of those days, for a lord and a lady."

For example, when Cormac sings of Steingerd, "She's a ring-bedight oak of the ale-cup," or addresses her as "sweet stem with the dragon's hoard shining," we know at once what he means; while of himself he sings: "I'm a tree that is tricked out in war-gear," and Bersi replies, when asked by Steingerd how it had fared at the Holmgang when Cormac and he had fought, "They call him, and truly they tell it, a tree of the helmet right noble." Indeed, the image is so common, and so evidently belongs to the habit of thought of the people, that it could only have arisen as the result of a universal and deep-seated belief.

The Sacred Tree also, as will be remembered, plays a large part in the story of Jeanne d'Arc, only the spirits or divinities have become, in the fifteenth century, fairies. One of the articles of her accusation was this: "A woman doth say that at the age of thirteen or thereabouts she did with her bodily eyes see St. Michael and St. Gabriel, in bodily form. Since then she hath seen a multitude of angels, and St. Catherine and St. Margaret have shown themselves to her in bodily form, etc. These latter have also formerly spoken to her near a spring which flows at the foot of a great tree, called in her neighbourhood 'The Fairies' Tree.' This spring and this tree nevertheless have been, it is said, frequented by fairies; persons ill of fever have repaired there in great numbers to recover their health."

When questioned as to this tree Jeanne replied, "Not far from Domremy there is a tree that they call 'The Ladies' Tree,' others call it 'The Fairies' Tree'; near by there is a spring where people sick of the fever come to drink, as I have heard, and to seek water, to restore their health. I have heard that the sick, once cured, come to this tree to walk about. It is a beautiful tree, a beech. Often I have heard the old folk—they are not of my lineage—say that the fairies haunt this tree. As for me, I never saw them that I know of. I have seen the young girls putting garlands on the branches of this tree, and I myself have sometimes put them there. Since I was grown up, I do not remember to have danced there. I have sung there more than danced."

Article V of the "Seventy Articles" prepared for

her accusation, is as follows:—"Near the village of Domremy there is a great tree, big and ancient; it is called 'The Charmed Tree of the Fairy of Bourlemont'; near by it is a spring; round this tree and this spring live, it is said, evil spirits called fairies, with whom those who own witchcraft are accustomed to come and dance at night." "What have you to say in answer to this article?" To which Jeanne replies: "For the tree and the spring I refer to my previous answers. The rest, I deny."

Some of the witnesses provide interesting details. For example, one says: "On the subject of the Fairies' Tree I have heard that the fairies came there long ago to dance; but since the Gospel of St. John has been read under the tree, they come no more. At the present day, on the Sunday when in the Holy Church of God the Introit to the Mass, 'Lætare, Jerusalem,' is sung, called with us 'the Sunday of the Wells,' the young maidens and youths of Domremy are accustomed to go there, and also in the spring and summer and on festival days; they dance there and have a feast. On their return they go dancing and playing to the Well of the Thorn, where they drink and amuse themselves gathering flowers." Another says: "It was the custom to go every year, on the Sunday of Lætare, which we call 'the Sunday of the Wells,' to play and walk round this tree. Jeannette went with us, we each brought provisions, and, the meal ended, went to refresh ourselves at the well." Another tells us how "there is a tree called by us the Ladies' Tree, because, in ancient days, the Sieur Pierre Granier, Seigneur de Bourlemont, and a lady called Fée met

under this tree and conversed together. I have heard it read in a romance." ('Jeanne d'Arc,' edited by T. Douglas Murray, pp. 366, 20, 214, 217, 221, 219.) From all this it is evident that the ancient beech tree was either itself, or that it occupied the place of, the sacred Fetish, or Juju-tree of the primitive dwellers of Domremy.

The whitethorn, associated in Christian tradition with the Crown of Thorns, was a sacred tree long before. Hence it is not surprising that the Irish consider it unlucky to cut down the holy tree. "Don't tamper with the 'lone bush,'" is a rustic warning everywhere in remote parts of Ireland. It is unlucky as well as dangerous to meddle with any tree accounted sacred. There is a sacred tree in the parish of Clenor, co. Cork, known as the *Crann a hulla*. It is a stunted ash, growing in a lofty, bleak situation, and is probably not more than 300 years old. Most likely it is an offshoot from the parent tree. Although quite unprotected, and fuel scarce in the neighbourhood, yet so much as a branch was never lopped off. Another sacred ash, called the "Big Bill Tree," is growing to this day in co. Tipperary, at least its *remains*. It looks like two trees, but is all that has survived of a trunk formerly 30 ft. round. Tradition records that if the smallest portion of this tree was ever burned in any house, that house also would in time be burnt.

In Norfolk the following tree and plant superstitions are still to be found with many others:

ASH.

It is said that if the "ash keys" fail any year, it portends changes in the Government, or a death in the Royal

Family. Up to 1848, when there were very few, a good crop had not failed for sixty years or more.

YEW.

If a bough of yew is brought into a house before Christmas, some one present will die before the next Christmas.

HOLLY.

It is unlucky to bring holly (locally called "Christmas" or "hulver") into the house before Christmas Eve; and if in taking down the decorations at Candlemas a piece be accidentally left, it is a sign of the death of some one belonging to the family.

WHITE AND BLACK THORN.

The bloom of either the whitethorn or blackthorn (the former known as "May") should not be brought into the home, or sickness may follow.

ELDER.

To bring in elder is also very unlucky, and the same applies to burning green elder.

BROOM AND PALM.

This belief in ill-luck applies also to palm and broom, and we have the couplet—

A sprig of broom in May
Will sweep the head of the house away.

APPLE-BLOSSOM.

Apple blossom after Michaelmas portends the death of a member of the family during the coming year. The same belief applies to the appearance of any fruit in flower out of season.

Everybody is familiar with the "Gospel Oaks," which are to be found in many parts of our own country, and are traditionally said either to be, or to occupy the spot where stood, the original oak tree under which the first preachers of Christianity stood and proclaimed the Gospel.

The tradition may very likely have a basis of truth, but the sacred character of these trees or their congeners ascends into the dim and distant past. We have all learnt from Cæsar of the sacred character attached to the oak in the mystic rites of the Druidical faith, and Pliny describes the solemn cutting of the mistletoe (which was a sacred plant only when it was found growing on the oak tree) by the white-robed priest with a golden sickle, under the light of the full moon. True, the researches of later critical historians and students have proved a good many things formerly attributed to the "Druids" to be without foundation, and doubt has even been thrown on the existence of any such special class as the "Druids" at all among our British ancestors;* but at any rate there is no doubt whatever that the worship of sacred trees, particularly the oak, and perhaps the mistletoe on the oak, and the veneration paid to sacred groves, formed a very large part of the religion of our Celtic and pre-Celtic ancestors.

* The most up-to-date information as to the "Druids" is contained in 'Social England,' vol. i, pp. 111—115, and 59. They were only found among the *Gaelic* Celts, and continued among them the traditions of the old pre-Celtic Iberian religion. They were not a *caste*, but an *order*, in which there were three classes—the Druids proper, Bards, and *Ovates*, *i. e.* *Vates*. They were finally destroyed A.D. 61 in the battle of Mona, as described below.

Cæsar (vi, 13) represents Druidism as being on the wane in Gaul, and as having originated in Britain, whither those who wished to study it thoroughly had to resort. "But," says Prof. Rhys,* "as there is no convincing evidence to identify it with any Brythonic tribe in this country, while there is evidence of its prevalence among the Goidels of Mona in the time of Agricola, and of its surviving in Ireland in the time of St. Patrick, and in the Pictland of the North in that of Columba, we infer that *it was a system evolved by the Continental Goidels, or RATHER ACCEPTED BY THEM FROM THE ABORIGINES*" (*i. e.* the *Iberian Picts*, etc.). In later Welsh the word "Druidecht" came to mean the arts of magic.

The Druidism of later times was a new creation. There is no proof of any formal connection between the Druidic priesthood and the Bardic system as it appears in Wales in the twelfth century. "Druidism was suppressed by the Romans, and there is nothing to show that the sacerdotal class, practically destroyed by Paulinus, ever regained its authority or maintained its organisation."

No one will forget the fine words in which Tacitus describes the destruction of the British army, and of the Druids, by Paulinus in the great battle at the Menai Straits, and of the subsequent doings of the Roman soldiers: "*Stabat pro littore diversa acies, densa armis virisque, intercurantibus feminis; in modo Furiarum, veste ferali, crinibus dejectis, faces præferebant. Druidæque circum, preces diras sublatis ad cælum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus perculere milites, ut quasi hærentibus membris, immo-*

* Rhys, 'The Welsh People,' pp. 83, 112, 255.

bilecorpus vulneribus præberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, et se ipsi stimulant, ne muliebri et fanaticum agmen pavescerent, inferunt signa, sternuntque obvios, et igni suo involvunt. Præsidium posthac impositum victis, excisique luci, sævis superstitionibus sacri. Nam cruore captivo adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant.” It reads like an account of our own doings lately in the Ibo country in West Africa, and of the destruction of the great Juju in the depths of the African forest. We need not, however, make too much of these and other descriptions of the religion of our ancestors, when we remember that Christianity itself was set down by these same writers as a “*sæva superstitio*,” and the Christians were accused of cannibalism and other horrid practices in connection with the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

In his ‘*Germania*’ Tacitus gives us some further information as to the sacred groves, saying, “*Lucos ac nemora consecrant, deorumque nominibus adpellant secretum illud quod solâ reverentiâ vident.*”

With Christianity comes, alike in Germany, Britain, Brittany, and elsewhere, a furious crusade against the Holy Trees and Groves. Constant denunciations were hurled at the practice—first from one Council of the Church, and then another, as at Arles in 452, at Tours in 567, and Toledo in 692.* In England in the reign of Canute we find the worship of stones and all kinds of trees and wood expressly prohibited, as also in a Canon of Edgar

* At Arles it was declared that “if in any diocese an infidel kindled torches, or worshipped trees, fountains, or stones, or refrained from destroying them,” he was to be held guilty of sacrilege (“*sacrilégii reum se esse cognoscat*”).

in 967. In Brittany the cult obtained to a very considerable extent, for in 658 a Council held at Nantes, after declaiming against the pagan rites then existing, specially refers to "oaks and stones still in the depths of the woods before which the people burn fires and place offerings;" and then the decree proceeds to strictly enjoin the Bishops of Brittany to have the trees thus worshipped torn up and burnt, and the stones before which idolatrous practices occurred cast down and hidden from those who sought to do them reverence. In spite of everything, however, the old ideas lingered on in the minds of the people, and even at the present time the greatest reverence is paid to the *menhirs* by the peasantry, and Breton women desiring offspring lay at their foot fruit and flowers, besides performing still more curious acts of propitiation. (Worsfold, 'The French Stonehenge,' pp. 13—15.) St. Boniface, with an ardour as keen as that of the soldiers of Suetonius at Mona, hews down, in the presence of the priests, the huge oak of the Hessian Heaven-god, and builds of the timber a chapel to St. Peter. In spite of all such efforts, the old religion of Sacred Tree and Grove, and the rites connected therewith, continued to survive in Europe, and the customs we have been considering to-night are the proof thereof. For the most part, however, the Church showed her wisdom in dealing with this aspect of ancient paganism, by adapting it to her own purposes. Just as she took over the old gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and made of the days and seasons sacred to them the festivals of Christian saints and martyrs, and of Christ Himself, so she

adapted Tree-worship to her own purposes; she turned the Cross itself into a Sacred Tree (Gal. iii, 13), as in the words of the glorious hymns, *Vevilla Regis*, and *Pange Lingua* :

“ O Tree of glory, Tree most fair,
Ordained those Holy limbs to bear.”

“ Faithful Cross, above all other,
One and only noble Tree ;
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be.

“ Bend, O lofty Tree, thy branches,
Thy too rigid sinews bend,
And awhile thy stubborn hardness,
Which thy birth bestowed, suspend,
As the limbs of Heaven’s high Monarch,
Gently on thine arms extend.”

She connected the whitethorn, as we have seen, with the Crown of Thorns, and at Glastonbury with St. Joseph of Arimathea; and of the month of May, sacred above all, ~~as we have seen~~, to the rites of Tree-worship, she made the month of Mary. For this we may be most thankful, for to it is largely due the survival of those ancient rites, and the possibility of our discovering their meaning, and it would be well if modern missionaries were to act more generally in the spirit of the same high common-sense, both for the good of the native races themselves, and for the benefit of folklorists of future ages.

This is the question it remains for us to discuss. Employing that method of co-ordination of which I have spoken, what is the idea, or what are the ideas,

that lie at the root of Tree-worship, and of Sacred Trees and Groves?

Mr. Frazer, pursuing through all the intricate windings of his three massive volumes the thread that shall lead to the solution of the mystery of "the Golden Bough," deals only with the question as it affects the Aryan races, though in the course of his investigation he arrives at two ideas, one of which is practically identical with, and the other a development of, Professor Tylor's principal hypothesis. Mr. Frazer's thesis is confined to discovering the meaning of that "Golden Bough" which was the passport of Eneas to Avernus, as described in *Æn. vi*:

"Ipse volens facilisque sequitur
Si te fata vocant.
Primo avulso non deficit alter Aureus,"

and of the rites connected with the priesthood of Nemi, the lake beside whose waters stood the Arician grove, so exquisitely portrayed in Turner's well-known picture, and described by Macaulay:

"The still glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia's trees,
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain."

With this main thesis we have nothing to do. He may, as far as we are concerned, be right, or he may be as mistaken as Mr. Lang has endeavoured to prove him in his 'Magic and Religion,' but no one can dispute the infinite labour and industry which Mr. Frazer has displayed in the pursuit of illustra-

tions from all possible sources, and his book is a perfect mine of folklore and folk-religion; but when he comes to discuss Tree-worship as a modern survival in Europe from antiquity, he goes no further back than the antiquity of the Aryan races. His words are: "In the religious history of the Aryan race in Europe"—(this includes all of the Aryan stock—Celts, Teutons, Greeks, and Romans)—"the worship of trees has played an important part. Nothing could be more natural. For at the dawn of history Europe was covered with immense primeval forests, in which the scattered clearings must have appeared like islets in an ocean of green. Down to the first century before our era the Hungarian forests stretched eastward from the Rhine for a distance at once vast and unknown. Four centuries later it was visited by the Emperor Julian, and the solitude, the gloom, the silence of the forest appear to have made a deep impression on his sensitive nature. In our own country the wealds of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex are remnants of the great forest of Anderida, which once clothed the whole of the south-eastern portion of the Island. . . . In the forest of Arden it was said that down to modern times a squirrel might leap from tree to tree for nearly the whole length of Warwickshire." The same, he goes on to show, holds good of Italy and Greece, and proofs of the prevalence of Tree-worship in ancient Greece and Italy are abundant.

All this is perfectly true, and yet we make bold to say that Mr. Frazer does not go far enough back; and the very examples that he proceeds to cite from the customs of modern savages, and from the sur-

vivals among ourselves and in the rest of Europe, prove this.

Tree-worship was, indeed, old before an Aryan set foot in Europe ; and though, as we shall see, they had themselves passed beyond the most primitive stage before their arrival here, they probably found the aborigines still in that stage, and hence the fact that the survivals of Tree- and Pillar-worship among ourselves show traces of both the most primitive and the later ideas.

The most primitive stage is that to which Professor Tylor has given, as I have shown elsewhere, the appropriate name of *Animism* ; and to this stage many of the details in the customs already described evidently belong, while others are as unmistakably derived from the succeeding stages when animism was becoming merged in, or developed into, polytheism. To the savage, whether in Australia, or the islands of the Pacific, or many parts of Africa to-day, or among the primitive races of mankind, the world in general is animate ; stocks and stones, plants and trees, animals and men, are all alike animated, and share an interchangeable life. Man conceives of them all as having souls like his own, and treats them accordingly. This is very noticeable in the case of sacred trees when the individual tree is regarded as a conscious personal being, and as such receives adoration and sacrifice. But the fact that Tree-worship originated in this stage of thought accounts for its being usually, if not always, found united with other cults, especially with the worship of stones and pillars, which equally embodied a life-principle of their own. This earliest

stage of animistic thought must have characterised the first inhabitants of Europe after the passing away of the great Ice Age, and survived among the pre-Aryan Neolithic races down to the beginning of history. As Mr. Clodd remarks: "The warm climate of Europe at the close of the great Ice Age favoured the growth of vegetation. This, in large degree, explains why, amidst the varied objects of their worship, which included stones as well as living things, that of trees played so leading a part among the (aboriginal inhabitants and their) Aryan (successors). All through Nature there are the ever-recurring events of birth and death, of fruitfulness and decay; hence all the festivals rich in flowers and fruits, and the honour specially paid to trees as the embodiment of the great principle of reproduction. Trees and plants grow, bleed when cut (this feature appears also in a Persian story referred to below), sounds issuing from them sometimes when wounded, wither, become old and die. The life, apparently locked up in the tree during the long winter, bursts out in spring, in summer, in autumn, in bud and leaf, and flower and fruit. The leaves and branches murmur in the zephyrs, moan in the breeze, and shriek in the gale. Was not all this a proof of the indwelling soul, that slept and woke, that died and came to life again?" In this aspect the Vernal Festival of the May-time, the garlands and the dances and the rejoicings, is the celebration of the awaking of the tree-soul to life again, the annual revival of Nature, the festival of reproduction and new birth. The Mycenæan religion, and the Tree- and Pillar-cult of the ancient Cretans, described by Dr. A. J. Evans,

probably continued at this stage from its origin up to 1500 or 1000 B.C., though at the period covered by his discoveries its development into the succeeding stage had already been effected, and the Neolithic peoples, who never got beyond it, have left its impress deeply on the peasantry among the cultured races of to-day, notwithstanding the migrations, and wars, and changes of 3000 years.

The connection between trees and stones as sacred objects is seen as a living belief among the natives of Central Australia to-day; *e. g.* in the rites performed at the *Intichiuma*, or sacred ceremony performed by the members of the Honey-ant Totem, with the object of increasing the numbers of the totemic honey-ants. At early morning on the appointed day the men assemble at the men's camp, where they decorate their foreheads, arms, and noses with twigs of the *Udnerringa* bush, and smear their bodies all over with dry red ochre. They then march in single file, and, after various performances, group themselves round a pit-like depression in the rocks, which is surrounded with a horseshoe-shaped wall of stone, open at the western end. "On the east side is an ancient mulga tree, which is the abode of the spirit of an Alcheringa man" (the *Alcheringa* were the mythical ancestors of the present Australians), "whose duty it was to guard the sacred ground. In the centre of the pit is a stone which projects for about eleven inches above the ground, and is the *Nanja* of an Alcheringa man who originated here and performed *Intichiuma*." The *Nanja* is some natural object, such as a tree or stone, which arose to mark the spot where an ancestor of the mythical

past (*Alcheringa*) went into the ground (sometimes he went up to the sky), leaving behind his spirit-part associated with his *Churinga*, *i. e.* the sacred stone or stick of the Arunta tribe, corresponding to the bull-roarers of the other tribes. The tree or stone is the *Nanja* of that spirit, and also of the human being in the form of whom it undergoes reincarnation. The *churinga* is the *Churinga nanja* of the human being. The ideas of the Australian natives as to marriage and birth are peculiar, and most interesting in their witness to a belief in a world of spirits on the part of people who are still in the lowest stage of Neolithic culture, and they point to a time when our own Neolithic ancestors held the same beliefs. They may be thus described:

The Australian believes that in the "Alcheringa" times, the furthest to which his imagination or tradition leads him, "lived ancestors, who, in the native mind, are so intimately associated with the animals or plants the name of which they bear, that an Alcheringa man of, say, the kangaroo totem may sometimes be spoken of as a man-kangaroo, or as a kangaroo-man. The identity of the human individual is often sunk in that of the animal or plant from which he is supposed to have originated. Going back to this far-away time, we find ourselves in the midst of semi-human creatures endowed with powers not possessed by their living descendants, inhabiting the same country, and divided into totem groups, according to the animal or plant with which they had affinity; and these totemistic groups are reproduced in the tribal arrangements to-day.

"Each of these Alcheringa ancestors is represented as carrying about with him, or her, one or more of the sacred stones, or 'churinga,' and each of these 'churinga' is intimately associated with the idea of the spirit-part of

some individual. Where they originated, or stayed, or camped for a time, there were formed what the natives call *Oknanikilla*, each one of which is a local totem centre; the result being that the whole country is dotted over with *Oknanikilla*, each, of course, connected with one totem. At each of these spots a certain number of the Alcheringa ancestors went into the ground, each one carrying his 'churinga' with him. His body died, but some rock or tree arose to mark the spot, while his spirit-part remained in the 'churinga'; and from these have sprung, and continue to spring, actual men and women who of necessity bear the totem name of the 'churinga' from which they came. The tradition of the natives is that when the spirit-child goes inside a woman, the 'churinga' is dropped. When the child is born, the mother tells the father the position of the tree or rock near to which she supposes the child to have entered her, and he, with one or two of the older men, searches for the dropped 'churinga.' Sometimes it is found, sometimes not; but in either case the natives firmly believe that it is always dropped by the spirit-child." Those found are always of stone: but if lost, wooden ones are made instead. "We have evidently," continue our authors, "a modification of the idea which finds expression in the folklore of so many peoples; and according to which primitive man, regarding his soul as a concrete object, imagines that he can place it in some secure spot apart, if needs be, from his body; and thus, if the latter be in any way destroyed, the spirit-part of him still persists unharmed. The idea according to which the spirit can undergo reincarnation is peculiar to the Central tribes, so far as the Australians are concerned, though there are not wanting indications of it among other tribes. According to the ideas of the Arunta tribe (one of the largest tribes of Central Australia), the 'churinga' is the dwelling-place of the spirit of the Alcheringa ancestors. He does not regard it as the abode of his own spirit-part. If anything happens

to it—if it be stolen—he mourns over it deeply, but does not imagine that damage to the ‘churinga’ means of necessity destruction to himself. When the spirit-part has gone into a woman, and a child has, as a result, been born, then that living child is the reincarnation of that particular spirit individual.”*

Each totem tribe has its *Ertnatulunga*, or place of safety, in which the “churinga” are deposited and kept. No woman is ever allowed to see them; for no woman, in the natural condition of the tribe, dare go near the gap in which is the sacred rock-painting, and near to which lies the *Ertnatulunga*. The youth approaching manhood only sees them after a long and painful process of initiation—

* Allied to this is the idea firmly held by the natives that the child is not the direct result of intercourse, that it may come without this, which merely, as it were, prepares the mother for the reception and birth also of an already formed spirit-child, who inhabits one of the local totem centres. So fixed is this idea, that it is held that the mere fact of a young woman passing one of these centres may lead to conception. For example, in the locality of the plum-tree totem, near Alice Springs, is a special rounded stone which projects from the ground about three feet. This stone is called *Erathipa*. The story is that in the Alcheringa time a plum-tree woman lost her *Nurtunja* (or sacred pole, emblematic of the totem animal or plant). Thinking it had been stolen, she put her baby boy, whom she had with her, into the hollow where the *Nurtunja* was broken off, and leaving with him a large number of “churinga,” she went in pursuit of the thief. The boy went into the ground, taking with him the store of “churinga,” and the *Erathipa* stone rose to mark the spot. The woman went straight up to the sky, and died of grief, because she could not find her *Nurtunja*.

To return to the *Erathipa* stone: there is on one side of it a round hole, through which the spirit-children are supposed to be on the look-out for women who may chance to pass near, and it is firmly believed that visiting the stone will result in conception.

If a young woman has to pass near to the stone, and does not wish to have a child, she will carefully disguise her youth, distorting her face, and walking with the aid of a stick. She will bend herself double like a very old woman, the tones of whose voice she will imitate, saying, “Don’t come to me; I am an old woman.”

which constitutes him a fully recognised adult member of the tribe.

Again, in describing the magic of the natives, Messrs. Spencer and Gillen say, "Just as the stones marking the spot where the thin animals and men died" (as previously described) "are associated with magic, so we find the same to hold good in the case of other stones and trees which are associated with special individuals of the Alcheringa. Near to Charlotte Waters, for example, is a tree which sprung up to mark the spot where a blind man died. This tree is called the *Apera Okilchya*, i. e. the blind tree, and the spot where it stands, the *Mira Okilchya*, or blind camp. Should this be cut down, it is supposed that the men of the locality in which it grows will become blind; or if anyone wishes to produce blindness in an enemy, all that he has to do is to go alone to the tree, and while rubbing it mutter his desire and an exhortation to the *Arungquiltha* (the magic evil influence) to go forth and afflict his enemy. (Spencer and Gillen, 'The Native Tribes of Central Australia,' pp. 187, 265, 336, 337, 552.)

It is curious that the word *Ju-ju* is not West African at all, but a modification of the French word *Jou-jou*, a toy or doll (cf. the May-doll, in the English May-day customs). Miss Mary Kingsley preferred to use the word *Fetish* to describe the West African religion, but she says of it, "Professor Tylor, most unfortunately for us, confines the word to one department of his theory of animism only, viz. to the doctrine of spirits embodied in, or attached to, or conveying influence through, certain material

objects; but," she continues, "it cannot be used only in this restricted sense; you want the whole of his grand theory of animism wherewith to describe the religion of the West Africans. For, although there is in that religion a heavy percentage of embodied spirits, there is also a heavier percentage of unembodied spirits—spirits that have no embodiment in matter, or only occasionally embody themselves in matter." Again: "To the African there is, perhaps, no gap between the conception of spirit and matter, animate or inanimate. It is all an affair of grade, not of difference of essence; the African will point out a lightning-stricken tree, and tell you that its spirit has been killed. In every action of his daily life he shows you how he lives with a great, powerful spirit-world around him." He is in the Neolithic stage of culture as regards his religious ideas, though the tools and implements of his daily life proclaim him to be in the Iron Age.

Again, she says that "the higher form of the Fetish idea is Brahmanism," and quotes the following beautiful lines to illustrate her meaning:

"God of the granite and the rose,
Soul of the lily and the bee,
The mighty tide of being flows
In countless channels, Lord, from Thee.
It springs to life in grass and flowers,
Through every range of being runs,
And from Creation's mighty towers
Its glory flames in stars and suns."

(Miss M. Kingsley, 'West African Studies,' pp. 96, 102, *seq.*)

The study of Dr. Evans' 'Mycenæan Tree- and Pillar-cult,' in which he describes and illustrates

his remarkable discoveries in Crete, shows that at the period to which his finds belong the worship of Sacred Trees and Pillars was the predominant factor in Mycenæan religion, as a mere glance at the extent of the objects depicted which present this feature is sufficient to prove, consisting, as they do, of cylinders (like the Chaldæan), lentoid gems, crystal and gold signet rings, and other articles innumerable; and it had reached that stage in which the sacred tree and its cognate pillar represented the *numen* of the indwelling divinity. As Dr. Evans says: "This dual cult is, indeed, so wide-spread that it may be said to mark a definite early stage of religious evolution" (as we have seen, it is not the *earliest*). "In treating here," he continues, "of this primitive religious type, the cult of trees and pillars, or rude stones, has been regarded as an identical form of worship." (We have seen how this appears in the customs belonging to May Day, and in much so-called folklore—cf. Tylor, 'Primitive Culture,' ii, pp. 160 *seq.*, and 215 *seq.*) "The group," he goes on, "is, indeed, inseparable, and a special feature of the Mycenæan cult scenes is the constant combination of the sacred tree with pillar or dolmen. The same religious idea—the possession of the material object by the *numen* of the divinity—is common to both. The two forms, moreover, shade off into one another; the living tree can be converted into a column" (as in the case of the May-pole) "or a tree-pillar, retaining the sanctity of the original. No doubt, as compared with the pillar form, the living tree was in some way a more realistic impersonation of the godhead, as a depository of the divine life

manifested by its fruits and foliage. In the whispering of its leaves and the melancholy sighing of the breeze was heard, as at Dodona, the actual voice of the divinity. The spiritual possession of the stone or pillar was more temporary in its nature, and the result of a special act of ritual invocation." (For the corresponding ideas of the early Hebrews, cf. Gen. iii, 8, and xxviii, 18.)

"In India," he proceeds, "this worship is best illustrated to-day; and in the Druidical worship of the West the Tree divinity and the Menhir or stone pillar are associated in a similar manner, and lingering traditions of their relationship are still traceable in modern folklore. To illustrate this we have to go no further afield than the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. Beside the prehistoric fence of Rollright the elder tree still stands hard by the King Stone, about which it is told that when the flowery branch was cut on Midsummer Eve, the tree bled, the stone 'moved its head.'" (Evans, *loc. cit.*, pp. 8, 9.)

I have quoted Dr. Evans at some length because the positions which he upholds are those which form the thesis of this paper, and because his discoveries in the Minoan palace at Knossos and elsewhere in Crete have proved to be among the most valuable and interesting of the results of recent archæological spade-work, and have succeeded in bringing to light a flood of evidence as to the life and thought of the people of the Mycenæan Age, which, previously to his investigations and those of Dr. Schliemann at Troy and Tiryns and Mycenæ itself, had been wrapped in the impenetrable mists of prehistoric antiquity.

There is thus no doubt that Dr. Evans' discoveries at Knossos prove that in the second millennium before Christ, as the Cretans were then passing into the Bronze Age, so, under the influence of Egypt, and of Phœnicia, derived from Babylonian sources, they were passing, or had passed, into the second stage in Tree-worship described below. The representations of altars with sacred trees, and aniconic pillars, prove that, as with the Babylonians, Phœnicians, and Hebrews, the tree and pillar have become the abode of deity, and are no longer regarded as themselves inherently divine.

The same idea is seen as universally prevalent on Assyrian and Chaldæan cylinders and bas-reliefs, in Egyptian representations of the *Ba*, or soul, receiving the lustral water from a tree-goddess, in a Mexican manuscript, in the Bodhi-tree of the Buddhists, in Greek representations of Dionysus and Apollo and Artemis, with the sacred tree and the laurel branch and the olive spray. On an imperial coin of Myra, in Lycia, the bust of the goddess is represented in the foliage of the tree, and in the Christian cathedral of St. Mark's, at Venice, the same idea may be seen surviving as ornament when its significance has been lost, for there we find, "embedded in the walls, high above one's head, a number of ancient sculptured slabs, on each of which a conventionalised plant, with foliage most truthfully and lovingly rendered, is set between two fabulous monsters, as fantastic and impossible as any to be met with in the whole range of heraldry."*

* For this and some of the preceding references I am indebted to 'The Sacred Tree,' by Mrs. J. H. Philpot, where also illustrations may be seen.

Representations of the sacred tree, or trees, are also found in Norman sculpture on the tympana of doorways, as at Ashford, in Derbyshire; or on fountains, as at Burnham Deepdale, in Norfolk; though these, as well as, perhaps, those at St. Mark's, may be more directly derived from the story of Paradise in Genesis, with its sacred trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the speaking Dragon-serpent. Mention of this, however, at once reminds us that we have in that story the later Hebrew version, purified and adapted to moral ends, of ideas of world-wide prevalence, which were as common in China as they were in Egypt and Chaldæa, which are found in Greece in the shape of the tree which bore the golden apples of the Hesperides, guarded by the Dragon, slain by Heracles, and which are seen in their latest living significance in the Yggdrasil tree of Eddas, already referred to. Whether the stone set up "for a pillar" by Jacob at Bethel and the stones set "for a witness" at Gilgal belonged to the same stage of development may be uncertain, but at least we may see in them a testimony, conscious or unconscious, to the old connection between Tree- and Pillar-worship, and the association of tree and pillar, apart or, as usually, together, with the presence of the divinity. The patriarchs, from Abraham downwards, erected their altars beside the giant oaks or terebinths, just as "amongst the Canaanites every altar to the gods had its sacred tree beside it; and when the Israelites established local sanctuaries under their influence, they set up their altar under a green tree, and planted beside it as its indispensable accompaniment

an *ashéra*, which was either a living tree or a tree-like post. This *ashéra* was undoubtedly worshipped as a sacred symbol of the deity, for 'in early times Tree-worship had such a vogue in Canaan that the sacred tree or the pole, its surrogate, had come to be viewed as a *general* symbol of deity.' " * As Dr. Evans points out, the pillars in front of Phœnician temples, the idea of which Solomon borrowed in the two pillars *Jachin* and *Boaz* (the names are significant) † in front of the temple at Jerusalem, and which reappear in the Mycenæan cult in Crete and elsewhere, though they may have originally served a *structural* purpose in the primitive wooden buildings as Pillars of the House, yet served a far more important religious purpose, as being themselves the shrine and symbol of deity, and ensuring the presence of the divinity, and his support and blessing to the House.

Among Mohammedans very interesting survivals of both Tree- and Pillar-worship may still be discovered. The Persians have the legend of the Sacred Tree from which blood oozed when it was felled—a story which is also found in many widely scattered localities; and they tell of the *túba*, the Tree of Happiness, which stands in the Palace of Mohammed, above the Seven Heavens, immediately under the Throne of God; while Dr. Evans gives a graphic account of this worship as he actually witnessed it carried out at a place called Tekekeöi, in Macedonia, and similar examples abound in the seldom-trod byways of the East.

* Philpot, 'The Sacred Tree,' p. 8.

† *Jachin* = He will establish; *Boaz* = In Him is strength.

The Persian Tales, as told recently by Mr. Wilfrid Sparroy in the 'Morning Post,' are as follows:

LEGEND OF THE SACRED TREE.

Meanwhile my guide, having struck up acquaintance with a countryman of his from Hamadan, was engaged in conversation with him. This new friend, Murshid Khan by name, was a tall swarthy fellow. He had come to buy a chip of the sacred tree talh', an acacia which has small round golden blossoms, whereof he related the following legend:—"Many centuries ago a certain peasant went to cut wood in a forest near the city of Hamadan. This he had been wont to do every winter in order to eke out his livelihood during the cold weather, as is still the custom among the peasantry in our parts. Now it chanced that his axe struck against a branch of a talh' which, as it happened, was in the way of the tree he was felling. To his consternation a stream of blood oozed out, followed by cries the most pitiable he had ever heard. They seemed, in their distressful anguish, to come from the heart of a mother that had lost her child. The axe fell from the peasant's hand, and he himself sank to the ground in a faint. When he recovered consciousness it was to look for the talh', . . . only to find it gone! He returned to the city as fast as his legs would carry him, and there he told his story, which was spread abroad among the people. And from that day to this the wood of the talh' has been regarded as sacred. Children use it in the place of mázus, and barren women, if they hang a chip of it above their beds for the space of forty consecutive Fridays, will bear children in due course. This is so."

Here the guide, Seyyid 'Alí, interrupted the speaker, saying, "Light of my heart, thou speakest the truth. In my country, in the town of Behbahan, near Shíráz, we have a famous way of protecting our womenfolk against the attacks of Aal—that cursed ogress who comes to cut out the liver of every mother after the birth of her child.

First we draw four lines round the walls of the house ; then at each of the four corners we plant a branch of the talk' tree ; and a dagger, with an onion atop, is stuck in the ground facing the door. This is the only possible way of keeping Aal out—may she be accursed ! ”

THE TREE OF HAPPINESS.

The prayer most acceptable to God is that of Nodbeh, which must be said by the pilgrims on Mount Arafat, with tears pouring from their eyes. The belief is that all the houris of Paradise listen to the pilgrims' supplications from the open verandahs of their heavenly palaces. To tell you the truth, I saw some lovely houris on the earth itself. The Prophet rose to a noble conception of the next life. He not only believed that the pure-hearted will see God ; he also proclaimed that blessing to be the height of heavenly bliss. The Muslim Paradise, therefore, in its material aspect unalloyed, is the invention of the tradition-mongers. According to the orthodox among them, it is situated above the seven heavens, immediately under the Throne of God. Some say that the soil of it consists of the finest wheat flour, others will have it to be of the purest musk, and others again of saffron. Its palaces have walls of solid gold, its stones are pearls and jacinths, and of its trees, all of which have golden trunks, the most remarkable is the tree of happiness, túba, as they call it. This tree, which stands in the palace of Mohammed, is laden with fruits of every kind, with grapes and pomegranates, with oranges and dates, with peaches and nectarines, all of which are of a growth and a flavour unknown to mortals. In response to the desire of the blessed, it will yield, in addition to the luscious fruit, not only birds ready dressed for the table, but also flowing garments of silk and of velvet, and gaily caparisoned steeds to ride on, which will burst out from its leaves. There will be no need to reach out the hand to the branches, for the branches will bend down of their own

accord to the hand of the person who would gather of their products. So large is the túba tree that a man "mounted on the fleetest horse would not be able to gallop from one end of its shade to the other in a hundred years." All the rivers of Paradise take their rise from the root of the tree of happiness; some of them flow with water, some with milk, some with wine, and others with honey. Their beds are of musk, their sides of saffron, their earth of camphire, and their pebbles are rubies and emeralds. The most noteworthy among them, after the River of Life, is Al-Káwthar. This word Al-Káwthar, which signifies abundance, has come to mean the gift of prophecy, and the water of the river of that name is derived into Mohammed's pond. According to a tradition of the Prophet, this river, wherein his Lord promised him abundance of wisdom, is whiter than milk, cooler than snow, sweeter than honey, and smoother than cream; and those who drink of it shall never be thirsty.

In the Zend-Avesta of the old Persians we read of a tree named *Hom*, or *Haoma*, which imparts immortality, and is called the King of Trees. This *Hom* or *Haoma* was a white tree said to grow in the middle of the mythic sea Vouru-Kasha. It would be by drinking of its juice on the day of resurrection that man would become immortal. Everywhere, even in New Zealand, we find the same stories. In Babylonian, and Persian, and Hebrew legend, either in a Paradise of the past, or, as adapted by the Christian Apostle and by Mohammed after him, in a Paradise of the future, grows the Sacred Tree, with its multiplicity of life-giving fruits and its healing leaves, and beside it is situated the Sacred Fountain. Look where we will, we find "that man," casting an intelligent eye over the wrongs and in-

equalities of this earthly life, "has ever looked on this present world as a passing scene in the shifting panorama of time, to be followed by some period of millennial glory."

The ceremony at Tekekeöi is thus described by Dr. Evans :

"A roomy, mud-floored antechamber, made for the convenience of the worshippers, communicated by an inner doorway with the shrine of the stone itself. The 'holy of holies' within was a plain square chamber, in the centre of which rose the sacred pillar. Like the bætylic * stones of antiquity, it might be said to have 'fallen from heaven,' for, according to the local legend, it had flown here over a thousand years since from Khorassan. The pillar consisted of an upright stone of square section, with bevelled angles, about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick, supporting another smaller and somewhat irregular block. Both were black and greasy from secular anointing, recalling the time-honoured practice of pouring oil on sacred stones as Jacob did at Bethel."†

Dr. Evans then describes the surroundings, the antique candlesticks standing on a sunk hearthstone in front of the pillars, and the fleeces of sacrificed rams strewn the floor, and continues :

"Taking his stand on a flat stone near the pillar, the suppliant utters a prayer, and afterwards embraces the

* It has been suggested that the Greek terms *βαίτυλον* and *βαπτύλιον* (applied in a special way to the stone which, according to Cretan legend, was swallowed by Kronos under the belief that it was his son) are derived from Bethel, or some parallel form, indicating the stone as the temporary place of indwelling for a divinity.

† Gen. xxvii. 18; xxxv. 14. Robertson Smith, 'Religion of the Semites,' p. 232. Cf. Ps. xlv. 7, and the existing custom of anointing kings and ecclesiastical dignitaries.

stone in such a way that the finger-tips meet at its further side ; some also kiss it. The worshipper who would conform to the full ritual, now fills a keg of water from a spring that rises near the shrine—another primitive touch ” (cf. the water drawn from the pool of Siloam at the Feast of Tabernacles in the Jewish ritual, a primitive survival)—“ and makes his way through a thorny grove up a neighbouring knoll, on which is a wooden enclosure surrounding a Mohammedan saint’s grave or Tekhi. Over the headstone of this grows a thorn-tree hung with rags of divers colours, attached to it—according to a wide-spread primitive rite—by sick persons who had made a pilgrimage to the tomb. The turbaned column itself represents in aniconic shape the visible presence of the departed saint, and conjointly with the thorn-bush, a material abode for the departed spirit, so that we have here a curious illustration of the ancient connection between Tree- and Pillar-worship.”

Various other ceremonies, including the sacrifice of a young ram, remain to be performed, after which the worshippers return to the shrine. “ Here,” says Dr. Evans, who himself took part in the ceremonies, “ beneath the same roof with the stone, and within sight of it through the open doorway, we were bidden to pass the night, so that the occult influences due to its spiritual possession might shape our dreams as in the days of the patriarchs.” (Evans, ‘ Mycenæan Tree- and Pillar-cult,’ pp. 104—106.)

The Persian legends point back to the earliest stage—that which I have called Neolithic or pre-Aryan—in Tree-worship ; the custom described by Dr. Evans is a survival of the second stage, which we will now proceed to discuss.

This second stage, at which the Aryan peoples

had for the most part arrived by the time history takes cognizance of them, is to regard the tree, not as a body animated, like man himself, by a living soul, but as the home and abode of a tree-spirit, though it is not always possible to fix the dividing line with perfect exactness. Thus when we read, as in Ireland, of sacred trees which may not be cut down because they are the seat of spirits, we cannot always say with certainty in which way the presence of the spirit in the tree is conceived. The familiar lines of Shelley, quoted by Prof. Tylor, well express this hesitancy :

“ Whether the sensitive plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.”

But in many cases, even where no mention is made of wood-spirits, we may generally assume, says Mr. Frazer, that when trees or groves are sacred and inviolable, it is because they are believed to be either animated or inhabited by sylvan deities. In Greek classical thought, the “ Dryads ” were the spirits or tutelary divinities of the woods. Like most of the Olympians, Artemis was connected not only with beast-worship, but with plant-worship. She was known by the name of Daphnœa and Cedreatis. At Ephesus, not only the olive, but the oak was sacred to her. At Delos she had her palm tree. Her idol was placed in or hung from the branches of these trees, and it is not improbable that she succeeded to the honours of a tree worshipped in

itself and for itself, or of the spirit or genius dwelling in and informing it. Artemis was therefore originally a wood goddess. Dionysus also was originally a tree-spirit, just as he was also an animal god, absorbing in his rights and titles various older forms of both tree- and beast-worship. He was called *Dendrites*, and as such succeeded, like Artemis, to the cult of certain sacred trees; just as, says Mr. Lang, St. Bridget in Ireland succeeded to the cult of the fire goddess and to her ceremonial. He is also called *ἐνδεδροος*, or the "god in the tree." As a god he is not only the patron of the vine and of the fig tree, but also of all pleasant trees; the festival of the *δενδροφορία*, as described in the 'Œdipus Tyrannus' of Sophocles, is held in his honour, and our May-day festivities are but a faint and far-off and innocent echo of the Bacchanalia, and, like them, embody in their rites the relics of the elder primitive faiths.

Similar examples of one creed inheriting the holy things of its predecessor are common enough, where either the missionaries, as in Mexico and China, or the early preachers of the Gospel in Brittany or Scandinavia, appropriated to Christ the holy days of pagan deities, and consecrated fetish stones with the mark of the Cross. Unluckily we have no historical evidence as to the moment in which the ancient tribal totems, fetishes, and sacrifices were placed under the protection of the various Olympians, in whose cult they survive like flies in amber. But that this process did take place is the most obvious explanation of the rude factors in the religion of Artemis, as of Apollo, Zeus, or Dionysus—as also of the rustic May sports of the English and

European peasantry in the twentieth century of Christianity. (Lang, 'Myth, Ritual, and Religion.')

So also all the attributes of Diana, the goddess of the Arician grove, are those of a tree-spirit or sylvan deity. Every grove was her sanctuary. Like a tree-spirit she helped women in trouble; she was the protectress of domestic cattle; she made the rain to fall, the sun to shine. (Frazer, 'The Golden Bough.')

Still, in this later stage, when a tree, or trees in general, have come to be looked upon no longer as embodying a tree-spirit, but as its home, which it can quit at pleasure, a real advance has been made. Animism is passing, by way of anthropomorphism, into polytheism. Hence in classical art the deities of the woods and forests, like all the gods and goddesses, are depicted in human shape.

Among savages, it is the tree-spirits who make the crops to grow, the herds to multiply, and through them women are blessed with offspring. Hence Dionysus is the god of reproduction, and Diana, under the name of Lucina, presides over childbirths.

The tree-spirit, being free to depart and take up his (or her, for, as we may understand from the later mythology here referred to, tree-spirits were conceived of as male and female, and could be even married together) abode when and where he (or she) would, might select a pole or a stone as equally suitable for a dwelling-place, and a relic of this ancient thought is contained in the lines attributed to our Lord in the Oxyrrhynchus Papyrus:

"Raise thou the stone, and find Me there;
Cleave thou the wood, and there am I."

What has been said, therefore, explains the origin of the Maypole. It takes the place of the sacred tree, and is endowed with all its properties. Hence the May trees set up in Germany at the doors of stables and byres. Hence the green bough of a tree which, as Camden says of the Irish, "they fasten on May Day against the house, to produce plenty of milk that summer." Hence the common European custom, already referred to, of placing a green bush on May Day before or on the house of a beloved maiden, which probably originated in the belief of the fertilising power of the tree-spirit. Hence the reason why customs like the May tree or Maypole are so universal in the popular festivals of European peasants.

A still later stage is that represented by the May-doll carried in the garlands, and by the King or Queen of the May, viz. when the tree-spirit is conceived as detached from the tree and clothed in human form, as in the imperial coin from Myra in Lycia, mentioned above, and even as embodied in living men and women; when it is on the way, in fact, to becoming a divinity, which finally takes shape as Dionysus and Artemis, Bacchus and Diana; or, the dignity of the male divinity, who only survives as Jack-in-the-Green, being dropped, the Queen of the May becomes clothed with all the virgin glories and splendid possibilities of the ever-blessed Mary, the Queen of Heaven.

We have not touched to-night on many other interesting customs, more or less surviving to the present day, in our own and other lands, connected with other seasons of the year, or with Church

Festivals, which undoubtedly bespeak a connection with the old worship of trees as plainly as do the May-day customs and other rites we have dealt with. Such, for example, are the customs of decking the church with flowers and fruit at the revived Harvest Festivals now so universal, and those with which we are all so familiar at Christmas. In that festival we find combined the Saturnalia of Rome, the ancient Yule-tide Festival of Scandinavia, and the Christian Feast of the Nativity. Then the churches and houses are decorated with holly and evergreens, and not only so, but the Sacred Tree itself is annually reproduced, to the delight of old and young, in the shape of the Christmas Tree. As Mrs. Philpot well says, "modern as it is in its present form, the Christmas Tree epitomises many most ancient ideas; is the point to which many streams converge, whose source is hidden in a far-distant antiquity. It is the meeting-point of the old pagan belief in the virtues vested in the tree and of the quaint fancies of the Middle Ages, which loved to see spiritual truths embodied in material forms. Christ, the Tree of Life, blossoming on Christmas Eve in Mary's bosom; the fatal tree of Paradise whence sprang the Cross, the instrument of man's salvation—that 'fruit-bearing, heavenly nourished tree, planted in the midst of redeemed men,' so often represented in mediæval art; the miracle of nature so stirred by the wonder of the event as to break forth into blossom in the midst of winter,—all these ideas, so characteristic of mediæval thought, become grafted together with observances derived from solstitial worship, upon the stock of the sacred tree, laden with

offerings and decked with fillets. Indeed, the Christmas Tree may be said to recapitulate the whole story of tree-worship—the May tree, the Harvest tree, the Greek eiresioné, the tree as the symbol and embodiment of deity, and last, but not least, the Universe tree, bearing the lights of heaven for its fruit, and covering the world with its branches.”

The question has been asked, Why should you not ascend higher than the Neolithic Age in seeking for the origin of Tree- and Pillar-worship? The answer is simple, viz. that we are led hereby to the period of the passing away of the last great Ice Age, and we know too little of the ideas of the Palæolithic races to be able to say anything with certainty as to them—else were it easy to see in the worship of both trees and serpents an evidence of the arboreal habits of the first evolved specimens of the human race, and to say that living in the trees of the forest the only creature whose attack early man had to fear was the serpent, and that therefore, by a natural instinct, he worshipped the tree that sheltered him, and the serpent whom he dreaded. This is certainly plausible, and may, no doubt, contain an element of truth.

To revert to that which has formed the principal subject of our consideration this evening: the main details of the May-day Festival, and the other rites and customs connected with Sacred Trees, as they still survive in, alas! too few and a rapidly diminishing number of localities in modern England, are seen to have their roots fixed in a far-distant past, when the races inhabiting Europe were in the stage

of development represented by the native Australians and other primitive races of to-day, and to embody in themselves three distinct stages of primitive but ever-advancing thought and culture—the first may be distinguished in Europe as pre-Aryan, the two latter as Aryan; and as such it is surely not too much to express a pious hope that where, and in so far as, they still survive, they may be jealously preserved, as precious landmarks in the tide of time. True it is, *nulla vestigia retrorsum*, but yet it is allowable to wish for the maintenance and transmission to posterity of those relics of the past which are still to be found here and there, “enshrined like flies in amber” in the midst of our twentieth century life, and which tell, in accents more eloquent than words, that “though the goal is long in winning, and the paths are oftentimes rough, yet humanity is led by ‘a way that it knows not;’” progress is the law of the ages, and the mind of man grows ever broader and deeper and higher in thought and feeling with the passage of the suns.

I spoke at the commencement of this paper of a modern aspect of tree-worship, *tree-culture* rather than *tree-cult*, in which it may be of great practical value, and not merely interesting for the study of early folklore and folk-religion. It may be, and probably is, too late to galvanise the customs connected with May Day into new life, and when they have died out, it is impossible to revive them. But a younger nation, one that has no associations with a past more than three hundred years back, has shown the way to a practical expression of a love for trees, and one that may bear good and useful

fruit in the future. As I pointed out in a letter last year to the 'Morning Post,' it is to the New World, to the United States of North America, that it has been left to establish a new vernal festival under the name of Arbor Day. This is the more remarkable, for, as Sir George Birdwood has said, among the Protestant Anglo-Saxons of North America the historical tradition of the divinity of the tree would naturally be weak; yet so strong is the feeling of actual consanguinity and fellowship, and of worship, with which all men, and emphatically the Aryan races, regard the tree, that this feeling forced its way to the surface, and would not be repressed. In America this beneficent festival is a movable feast, the date of its celebration varying, according to the climatic conditions of the different States, from the 1st of April to the 31st of May. It was first held in Nebraska, on a resolution of the Board of Agriculture, moved by Mr. J. Stirling Morton, setting apart the 10th of April, 1872, as "Tree-planting Day." In April, 1874, the second Wednesday of April was proclaimed as "Arbor Day," and in 1885 the 22nd of April was permanently fixed as Arbor Day for Nebraska. In 1876 Michigan and Minnesota followed suit, and finally New York in 1888; in which year, on the 30th of April, an Act was passed decreeing that "the Friday following the 1st of May in each year shall hereafter be known throughout this State as Arbor Day." By a popular vote of the State schools the "White Elm" was declared to be the "Tree of the State," and the Rose of Spring, in all its grace of budding beauty, the "Queen of Flowers." Perhaps they were thinking of the

monumental brass formerly in Westminster Abbey, bearing a crowned rose with the legend round it—

“Sis Rosa, flos florum
Morbis medicina meorum.”

The United States were at once imitated by the Dominion of Canada; and in 1896 by Spain, where King Alphonso XIII fixed the 26th of March for the annual celebration of the *Fiesta del Arbol*. So far I have followed the account given by Sir George Birdwood.

More recently still the idea has been taken up in Italy, and has been entered into *con amore* by the enthusiastic people of that sunny land. It is thus described by “Cisalpine” in the ‘Guardian’ for May 21st, 1902. The writer is lamenting the decay of the Church Festivals, owing to the occupation of Rome and the downfall of the Temporal Power, and continues: “What struck me many years ago has received some emphasis quite lately in the institution of a secular Italian festival, *la festa degli alberi*, which has been variously commented on in the Italian press. This new national festival has many of the elements of the best pagan ideal. One feels the heat of the sun-god, beneath whose touch all nature turns to thoughts of growth; the scent of the fields, the green of the new verdure, the blue of the hills, the rhythmic swing of the southern footstep, the laugh of children’s voices, a sense that all nature is awake, accompany us as we wind up the hill, rich with Latin history, to plant new trees. Local officials, even the King himself, the people in holiday guise and holiday mind, the school children, girls and boys,

walk or drive in the procession ; for this is a public holiday, a national fête, an ode to the spring. This is how one of the Italian *Journals* speaks of the fête : ‘ Long ranks of girls in the fields, freed from the exercises of a sterile piety in the convent or the sacristy, as though blessing with their fresh smiles and opening beauty the vital works of nature, and emulating in trials of physical strength the youths who to-morrow will be the companions of their maternal power—whence will be born to Italy brave citizen-workers for the commonweal—such a spring vision, persuading by its beauty and strength, must certainly prepare the way for the accomplishment of those sacred duties from which the country expects an ever more propitious future.’ ”

Stripped of its more open paganism, one asks : Is it impossible that such a beauteous festival of the springtime should once more become universal in England ? And what better time of year could be suggested than some date within the three spring months, April to June ? Some spasmodic attempts have been made to establish such a festival, and a suggestion has been made that it should be fixed for November 1st, with a view to re-planting our worn-out apple-orchards, and promoting the cultivation of fruit trees generally. There is something in this suggestion, inasmuch as the apple was undoubtedly one of the Sacred Trees which the first Aryan immigrants brought with them from the Continent into the British Isles—a subject on which I have said nothing to-night, as it has been exhaustively dealt with by Dr. Phené,—and it was the apple tree of the prehistoric Celtic immigrants that gave to the

whole peninsula of the "West of England" (Gloucestershire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall), stretching vaguely from roving Camelot to Lyonesse, "The wave-worn kingdom of romance," the name of "ancient Avalon" (Avelion, Avaloniæ Insula, "Apple Island"): "Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns, and bow'ry hollows, crowned with summer seas." But the season is too late. It is much better to keep to the time consecrated from of old, and make of Arbor Day, the Festival of the Trees, a veritable spring or summer festival. St. George's Day is too early, May Day is already appropriated to other, though kindred, associations. Midsummer Day would be very suitable; and had the Coronation of King Edward VII taken place as originally fixed in June, I should say, what could be more fitting and more practical than to institute an annually recurring Arbor Day in the month of June, devoted to the planting of trees, as part of a national and universal festival? I still see no reason why this should not be done. It has already been carried out in connection with the Jubilees of her late Majesty in my own village, and notably by Mr. E. D. Till at Eynsford, in Kent, and no doubt in many other places also. But I should like to see it national and universal; an Arbor Day Society exists, and it cannot do better than turn its attention to this proposal for carrying out its objects.

Trees are no longer worshipped, and we do not need the pagan associations which seem to be revived in Italy; oaks are no longer required for our navy: but trees are not merely an ornament to the landscape; they are a necessary adjunct to the

fertility of the soil, and of great importance to the climate. We cannot hope, nor would we wish, to restore the mighty forests of the past, but anything that can be done to prevent further denudation and to maintain the beauty of our English countryside will be of untold value to the generations to come.

Moreover it will be one more means of adding to the gaiety of the nation, of bringing youths and maidens together in innocent enjoyment, full of rich possibilities for the future, and of doing something, though but a little, to mitigate the dulness of English twentieth-century village life.

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